



## CONJUNCTIVITIS (Pink Eye)

### What is CONJUNCTIVITIS (pink eye)?

Conjunctivitis, most commonly known as pink eye, can be caused by bacterial or viral infection or by allergic reactions to dust, pollen and other materials.

### What are the symptoms of conjunctivitis?

Bacterial and viral infections usually produce white or yellowish pus that may cause the eyelids to stick shut in the morning. The discharge in allergic conjunctivitis is often clear and watery. All types of infections involve redness and burning or itching eyes. Red and sore eyes may also be part of viral respiratory infections, including measles.

### How is conjunctivitis spread?

The germs that cause conjunctivitis may be present in nasal secretions, as well as in the discharge from the eyes. Persons may become infected after touching a contaminated surface and then rubbing their eyes. If a person uses contaminated towels or eye makeup, they can also infect their eyes.

### How is conjunctivitis treated?

*Viral conjunctivitis* – There is no specific treatment recommended. Over-the-counter eye drops may relieve some symptoms. **DO NOT USE STEROID EYE DROPS.**

*Bacterial conjunctivitis* – Antibiotic eye drops are indicated and will help limit spread and relieve symptoms. An individual is considered contagious until after treatment is administered for 24 hours. During this time, the infected individual should be excluded from work, school or daycare.

*Allergic conjunctivitis* – There is no specific treatment recommended. Over-the-counter eye drops may relieve some symptoms.

### What can I do to prevent becoming infected?

- Practice good handwashing.
- Avoid touching your eyes. If it is necessary to rub or touch the eyes, be sure that your hands were carefully washed.
- Avoid sharing articles such as face towels, eye makeup and contact lenses.

### Do any special precautions need to be taken for children in day care?

If a child in a day care facility develops pinkeye:

- Contact the child's parents and ask them to have the child seen by a doctor. Eye injuries and foreign bodies in the eye can cause similar symptoms.
- Monitor the other children for signs of pinkeye.
- Make sure all children and staff use good handwashing practices and hygiene, including proper use and disposal of paper tissues used for wiping the nose and eyes.
- Eliminate any shared articles, such as cloth towels. Use disposable paper towels.
- Disinfect any articles that may have been contaminated.
- Exclude children with a white or yellow discharge until their symptoms have disappeared or until 24 hours of treatment is administered, if the diagnosis is bacterial conjunctivitis. Children with a watery discharge generally do not need to be excluded, but should be monitored for more serious symptoms such as a fever or a rash.